

Kansas Natural Resources Apprentice I n i t i a t i v e Class of 2000

*"I hope that other people are able to learn
about and be a part of this wonderful
program."*

Nikki Krien, St. Francis, Kansas
Former Apprentice

Mission Statement

To increase student
awareness of natural
resources stewardship
through interactive learning
experiences and public and
community service.

website: www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov

Class of 2000

Apprentice Review

The Kansas Natural Resources Apprentice Initiative began the summer of 1998. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Kansas initiated the program to acquaint students with the importance of conserving our natural resources.

What is an Apprentice? One who is learning by practical experience under skilled workers—a trade, art, or calling.

The apprentices volunteer their time just like any Earth Team volunteer and must be 14 years of age. Some apprentices volunteer for NRCS and also work another part-time job. Some work after school, just in the summer, or year round. Most work at least 10 hours per week.

Although the Initiative seeks the apprentice with a non-ag background who can learn from this experience, it does not exclude the student with an ag background.

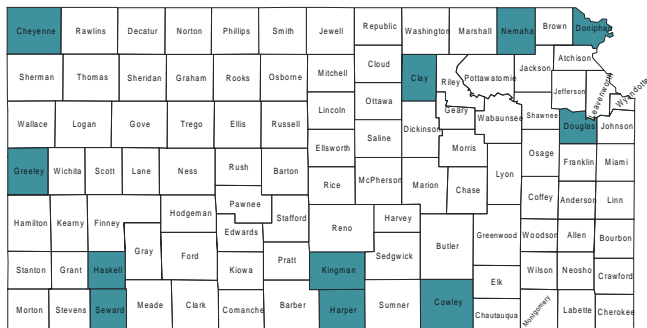
The Initiative brings benefits to the apprentices:

- Provides experience and information to help make informed career choices.
- Fulfills community service requirements for scholarships, college, and technical schools.
- Provides work experience for job application resumé.
- Provides a reference to natural resources in making lifetime decisions.

As you read the following about the apprentices and additional comments by others, you will find that the apprentices participated in a variety of work. Every apprentice provided insight into their experience with NRCS. Their remarks are priceless. Most apprentices volunteering for NRCS will not be career employees, but their contribution will benefit the conservation effort for years to come, as they vote and make lifetime decisions.

For more information about the Kansas Natural Resources Apprentice Initiative, contact the State Coordinator Mary Shaffer at 785-823-4571 or your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office listed in the phone book under United States Government--Agriculture Department.

Meet the Apprentices



In FY-2000 apprentices worked in the 11 counties highlighted in blue on the map. Kansas was fortunate to have 16 apprentices: Homeschooled - 2; High School, School to Career - 6; Returning Apprentice - 5; and New Apprentice - 3.

★★★Dustin Scott Seneca Field Office, Nemaha County
Traditional, High School Senior
B&B High School's Career Development Program

Dustin assisted the Seneca Field Office personnel by updating landowner information in the computer and preparing new folders, maps for conservation program contracts. He also assisted the technicians with some stakeout, such as terraces.

★★★Chad Schmitz Seneca Field Office, Nemaha County
Traditional, High School Senior
B&B High School's Career Development Program

Chad assisted the Seneca Field Office personnel with

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updating landowner information in the computer and preparing new folders, maps for conservation program contracts. He also assisted the technicians with some stakeout, such as terraces.

★★★ Barbara Voeller

St. Francis Field Office
Cheyenne County
Nontraditional, High School

Barbara was originally looking for a paying job, but signed on as an apprentice to gain experience in her major field, ecological science. She was able to work with people in different career occupations and observe different aspects of their jobs: district conservationist, soil conservation technician, soil scientist, and engineer.

★★★ Lee Sudbeck Seneca Field Office, Nemaha County
Traditional, High School Senior
B&B High School's Career Development Program

Lee assisted the Seneca Field Office personnel with updating landowner information in the computer and preparing new folders, maps for conservation program contracts. He also assisted the technicians with some stakeout, such as terraces.

★★★ Andrew Soule

Winfield Field Office, Cowley County
Nontraditional, 2nd Year, High School

Andrew assisted with survey work, well plugging and other water quality projects, field evaluations of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) enhancement seedings, National Tillage Survey, tree plantings, and information activities. He also entered progress summary data on the Internet. "Andrew was a great asset to the team. He has a friendly nature, is punctual, and eager to learn," said Barry Barber, District Conservationist.

Reference for a lifetime: "The three apprentices learned more about conservation and water quality and working with the public," said Eldon Schwandt, District Conservationist, who helped three apprentices learn about natural resources conservation.

★★★ Jon Cook Lawrence Field Office, Douglas County
Traditional, 2nd year, High School

Jon did a variety of activities, such as clean vehicles, file, data entry, assist with field checks, makes copies, clean office workstations, and assist with mailings. Jon worked at the USDA Service Center and the conservation district office. He checked daily to find what jobs might be available. Everyone really enjoyed and appreciated Jon.

★★★ Desiree Travis

Kingman Field Office, Kingman County
Traditional, 2nd Year, High School

Desiree assembled CRP contracts and mailed out, received and recorded data and input information from status reviews. She completed seeding sheets for CRP plantings and assisted with terraces and waterway surveys.

Clyde Mermis, District Conservationist, recommends the Apprentice Initiative: "The apprentice program is an excellent way to expose students to the daily operation of an NRCS field office. Provides career opportunities and exposure to different types of work. They learn how to effectively communicate and deal with the public."

★★★ Kenneth D. Moser

Sublette Field Office, Haskell County
Nontraditional, Career Change

Kenny assisted the District Manager with the district newsletter. He helped with status reviews and computer data entry for the National Tillage Survey. Kenny said, "I gained valuable work experience and the NRCS staff explained different job opportunities."

★★★ Brian Twombly Troy Field Office, Doniphan County
Nontraditional, Homeschooled

Brian edited average cost share data, figured terrace cost share rates, filed newsletters, and went on field checks. Brian said the apprenticeship appealed to him because "I like the outdoors and was interested in seeing what a job in this field would entail. Also, it's an opportunity to learn about taking care of the soil, as well as helping out farmers."

★★★ Heather Figger

Sublette Field Office, Haskell County
Nontraditional, 3rd Year, High School

Heather helped do status reviews, filing, and computer data entry and National Tillage Survey. Heather said about her apprenticeship, "To be out in the field to see technical practices, I really enjoyed being a part of the NRCS Earth Team."

District Conservationist John Meisenheimer said, "It's good to educate young people about what we do and try to teach them about our natural resources."

★★★★Masey Wolfe Tribune Field Office, Greeley County
Traditional, 2nd Year, High School

Masey gave a presentation promoting the apprentice program at an Area VI Partnership meeting. He was a great help moving furniture and organizing our new office space. This is his third summer with the apprentice program. He assisted with practice stakeout and status reviews.

Masey will reference his community service through the apprenticeship when he applies for college scholarships and an appointment to the Air Force Academy.

Work Tip: District Conservationist Kevin Nelson: The apprenticeship gave Masey work experience in other areas of agriculture besides production.

Recruitment Tip: Nelson also says he views the apprentice program a success since Masey has returned to work for three summers. He plans to point this out in recruiting future apprentices.

★★★★Garrison Bauman Sunflower RC&D, Harper, Kansas
Harper County
Nontraditional, Homeschooled

Garrison has been involved in the following activities: range tour, recycling programs, state fair booth and "Kids Day on the Farm" in Pratt and Riggs Arboretum near Kingman.

Garrison says: "I think being an NRCS Apprentice is great. I am glad that I have a chance to help benefit the environment and have fun too."

★★★★Lucas Shivers Clay Center Field Office, Clay County
Nontraditional, High School

★★★★Robert Elliott Clay Center Field Office, Clay County
Nontraditional, High School

★★★★Derek Sanneman Clay Center Field Office, Clay County
Nontraditional, High School

The apprentices received work experience, learning about the NRCS day-to-day operations. The students received basic understanding of the natural resource environment by visually seeing some of the resource concerns that exist in the county. They all provided community service in helping at the office not only with NRCS but with the conservation district activities.

These apprentices also were tutored and mentored by former apprentice Janelle Reiger. She worked for the Clay County Conservation District as the nonpoint source coordinator. She helped them learn about field surveying, recording field notes, and setting up equipment, such as the laser

Derek is interested in natural resource conservation and is planning to go into this field of work.

Recruiting Tip: Lynn Thurlow, District Conservationist, said, "This past year the local high school contacted NRCS for apprentice opportunity. This was from previous leg work done promoting the program."

★★★★Adam Cline Liberal Field Office, Seward County
Nontraditional, High School Graduate

Adam completed CRP status reviews in the field. He located noxious weeds and marked large areas on the plan map and notified the owner. Seward County Conservation District paid for Adam to attend Range Youth Camp, and this provided him with additional education and experience. He collected 15 native grasses for a display at the county fair.

Adam said: "This program allows students to see firsthand what USDA-NRCS is about. It gave me a chance to do community service for a worthwhile program. This experience will help me in the process of deciding on my career venture."

Recruiting Tip: Jeff Schmidt, District Conservationist: "I wrote a letter to each high school counselor and explained the program. I enclosed the "Class of 99" brochure and I told them about our last year's apprentice. I sent this information to their home so they could review it without interruptions.

Schmidt said: This was Adam's first job since high school graduation. It gave him the opportunity to experience an office operation. Adam through the apprenticeship gained confidence in what he was doing and in himself.

Career counseling: Adam likes being in the out of doors and would like to work as a wildlife biologist, fisheries. With NRCS he learned about wildlife with birds and animals. It was emphasized that he needs to take as many ag-related college classes as possible. Range management is another possible career choice.